

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	11 November 2021
Title	Veterinary Nurses Council Report to Council
Summary	<p>To note the minutes of the meeting of Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) held on 15 September 2021. In particular, to note the following:</p> <p>VNC had agreed to a trial of e-certificates for newly registered veterinary nurses, for a three to four month period.</p> <p>VNC had noted the provisional accreditation by VN Education Committee of a new Awarding Organisation for delivery of Level 3 Diplomas in the Further Education sector, and the approval of an amended version of the RCVS Post-registration Framework for Veterinary Nursing.</p> <p>A number of activities to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the veterinary nursing profession had already taken place and were going well, and further activities were planned.</p>
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Classified appendix
Author	Annette Amato Committee Secretary a.amato@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0713

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	2, 3, 4

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Veterinary Nurses Council

Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 15 September 2021

Members:	Mrs Belinda Andrews-Jones	-	Vice-Chair
	Miss Alison Carr		
	Dr Niall Connell	-	Officer Team observer (non voting)
	Ms Elizabeth Cox		
	Miss Jane Davidson		
	Mr Dominic Dyer		
	Ms Sarah Fox		
	Mrs Susan Howarth		
	Mrs Katherine Kissick		
	Mrs Donna Lewis		
	Mr Matthew Rendle	-	Chair
	Dr Katherine Richards		
	Ms Stephanie Richardson		
	Mrs Claire Roberts		
In attendance:	Mrs Annette Amato	-	Committee Secretary
	Mr Luke Bishop	-	Media and Publications Manager
	Dr Niall Connell	-	RCVS Officer observer
	Mrs Julie Dugmore	-	Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Ms Eleanor Ferguson	-	Registrar
	Miss Shirley Gibbins	-	Qualifications Manager
	Mrs Victoria Hedges	-	Examinations Manager
	Mr Robert Hewes	-	Head of Insight and Engagement
	Ms Lizzie Lockett	-	Chief Executive
	Mr Ben Myring	-	Policy and Public Affairs Manager
Guests:	Fallon Pfeifer	-	Veterinary student observer

Apologies for absence

1. There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest.

Obituaries

3. No written obituaries had been received. Council was encouraged to have a moment of reflection after the meeting, for all members of the professions who had passed since the last meeting, and for the on-going difficulties resulting from the current pandemic.

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021

4. The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

5. There were no matters arising on the previous Minutes.

CEO update

6. Council noted the CEO's update report, which provided a summary of activity against the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.
7. The CEO added that the staff team had worked hard on numerous activities over the past year and were making headway on many strategic projects.
8. One item that had not been covered in the update report was the issues relating to the workforce shortages, which had been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and Brexit. This was affecting both the professions, although more so for veterinary surgeons post-Brexit. The RCVS was currently carrying out research, gathering data on those leaving and joining the professions and working patterns, focusing on the three Rs – Retention, Recruitment and Return. The College was looking into introducing a support system for veterinary surgeons returning to practice after a break, equivalent to the Period of Supervised Practice scheme for veterinary nurses. It was also important to look at ways in which veterinary nurses could be encouraged to return to the profession.
9. The College was looking into English Language testing requirements and mutual recognition of veterinary degrees for overseas qualified veterinary surgeons.
10. A Workforce Summit was planned for late autumn, which would be held under the ViVet banner and research was underway to support the discussions. In the meantime, supportive messages would be sent out to all members of the veterinary team, acknowledging the difficult times and reiterating the need to do their best and to document issues.
11. The report of the outcome of the survey on the impact of the Covid pandemic would be published within the next few weeks.
12. The Chair thanked the Senior Team for all their hard work and support during these challenging times. In response to a query on any areas where help and support was required, the CEO

- confirmed that a flexible approach was currently being taken regarding homeworking for staff, and additional staff members were being recruited to ensure the strategic requirements could be met.
13. Work on the review of Council culture would involve the establishment a number of small working parties, with which the VN Council members of RCVS Council were currently involved. At the next stage there would be the opportunity for feedback on certain areas from VN Council, and the CEO would keep VNC informed.

Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC)

14. Susan Howarth, Chair of the VNEC, presented the minutes of the two meetings of the VNEC held since the last meeting of Council, and highlighted the following points:
15. **VNEC Meeting of 25 June 2021.** The Committee had welcomed a new member, as approved by VN Council, with specialist knowledge of post-registration qualifications. An additional member of staff had joined the quality assurance team, with a focus on Higher Education (HE) qualifications. It was intended to recommence in-person visits and accreditations in the autumn.
16. The Committee had agreed the following accreditation, reaccreditation and change in accreditation status:
- Lantra Awards – provisional accreditation for the following:
- Lantra Awards Level 3 Work Based Diploma in Veterinary Nursing - Small Animal
 - Lantra Awards Level 3 Work Based Diploma in Veterinary Nursing – Equine
- Lantra Awards is a large provider of Further Education Awards, and as the majority of veterinary nurse students are educated through the further education route, it was encouraging to have a new Awarding Organisation accredited for this sector.
17. University of Portsmouth – reaccreditation for the FdSc Veterinary Nursing Science.
18. The University of Glasgow – a change in accreditation status to full accreditation for the following programmes had been agreed, following Chair's action:
- Scottish BSc in Veterinary Nursing
 - Scottish BSc(Hons) in Veterinary Nursing
19. Full reports had also been made on the various ongoing monitoring activities of the department.
20. The Committee had approved an amended version of the RCVS Post-registration Framework for Veterinary Nursing, which incorporated minor amendments based on feedback from providers and accreditation visitors, following its implementation in June 2019.
- VNEC Meeting of 4 August 2021**
21. The Committee had been presented with a new risk-banding matrix summarising the review of self-assessment reports submitted by Awarding Organisations, Higher Education Institutions and

- Delivery Centres. This had been very helpful and the format would be continued for the future.
22. The Committee had received the report of the Pre-registration Examination Board following the examinations held in June. The Board had commended the examinations team for delivering the examination under very challenging circumstances.
 23. The Committee had noted the annual statistical report detailing student numbers at different stages being educated through the Higher Education and Further Education routes.

E-Certificate for newly registered Veterinary Nurses

24. The Head of Insight and Engagement presented a paper setting out a proposal to issue e-certificates to newly registered VNs on a trial basis. Following a successful trial of an e-certificate for a ring-fenced group of veterinary surgeons between March 2020 and January 2021, the e-certificate had now been introduced to all newly registered veterinary surgeons as part of the standard registration process. Registrants could access their certificate at any time through their MyAccount, and were offered a physical copy certificate, free of charge, if they wished.
25. Council was asked to consider a proposal to provide registration e-certificates to newly registered veterinary nurses from 1 November 2021, for a period of three to four months, followed by a survey to gather feedback to measure the success of the trial, make changes or improvements and consider a permanent implementation of the e-certificate for veterinary nurses. Veterinary nurses would be able to request a physical copy of the certificate, free of charge, in line with the process for veterinary surgeons. The benefits of the e-certificate would include reduced impact on the environment, a saving in human resources to produce them, and cost savings in production and postage. Certificates were always accessible and could not be lost, with the individual being able to print off a copy at any time or share a PDF with an employer.
26. Council was in agreement that the proposals were sensible and in line with other organisations. In response to a concern that there may be a risk that nurses no longer on the Register may use this as a proof of registration, it was clarified that this would be no different from the current paper certificate, which was issued at the point of first registration and had no end date, and was not a proof that the individual was currently on the Register. Employers were always encouraged to check the online Register tool (Find a Vet Nurse) or contact the Registration department for up-to-date information. It was also noted that consideration may be given in the future to providing a confirmation of annual renewal.
27. The proposals set out in the paper were approved.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

28. The Lead for Postgraduate Education introduced the main points from the minutes of the CPD Policy Working Party and the CPD Compliance Panel. The main focus in the past year had been the provision of support for the professions either to use 1CPD or the outcomes-based CPD model. A number of workshops had been held and had been very successful, and further workshops would be held in the autumn. All those not currently using 1CPD were being contacted

and offered a support session. It was noted that 88% of RVNs were currently using 1CPD.

Reports from RCVS Committees

Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

29. Council noted the report of the work of the RVN PIC since May 2021.

Standards Committee

30. Claire Roberts provided a brief update on unclassified items from the Standards Committee meeting held on 13 September.
31. The Committee had been asked to provide comments by email on a consultation by Defra on the government's proposed changes to the rules governing the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). The key proposed measures included increasing the minimum age at which dogs could be brought into Great Britain, prohibiting the commercial and non-commercial movement into Great Britain of dogs with cropped ears and docked tails, and prohibiting the commercial and non-commercial movement of heavily pregnant dams (female dog) into Great Britain.
32. A member raised some concerns that the points on the pet importation consultation could raise issues for rescue centres trying to import to Great Britain. Council agreed that this concern should be brought back to Standards Committee as this consultation is bound to generate further debate.

Policy and Public Affairs update

33. The Policy and Public Affairs Manager provided a brief update.
34. RCVS Council had approved the full set of Legislation Working Party recommendations, including those affecting the veterinary-led team, regulation of allied professionals, protection of title, flexibility in delegation and expanding the role of veterinary nurses in anaesthesia. The recommendations would now be taken to government. A meeting had already taken place with the UK Chief Veterinary Officer, and further meetings with MPs were planned. It was confirmed that a summary would be published on the website in the next few weeks.
35. The first stage of research work on retention and recruitment within the professions was already in train. This was a major project which would be ongoing for some time. The preliminary report would feed into a number of workshops on the subject of the three Rs – Retention, Recruitment and Return.
36. The Environment and Sustainability Working Party was reaching the final stages of its work both on internal RCVS policy and external policy. Good progress had been made. A Practice Standards Scheme project on these issues was in the pipeline, and the RCVS was also seeking accreditation under the Investors in the Environment (IiE) scheme.

Communications report

37. The Media and Publications Manager provided an overview of recent VN-related activities in the Comms Department.
38. A number of activities to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the veterinary nursing profession had already taken place and were going well, with very good interaction and engagement on social media. Further activity would take place at the forthcoming BVNA Congress. Other topics which would be covered at the BVNA Congress were the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, the VN Futures report and Mind Matters sessions on student mental health.
39. The next Veterinary Nurses Evening to welcome newly qualified veterinary nurses to the profession would take place on 21 October. A press release and invitation would be issued shortly.
40. The interim VN Futures report was being finalised and copies would be available at BVNA Congress.
41. There would be a Mind Matters student veterinary nurse wellbeing forum on 3 November. This would be publicised shortly and was aimed at students and early-career veterinary nurses. Information based on research conducted by the Mind Matters team would be published shortly and the Chair confirmed that this issue would be brought back to VN Council for full discussion when the full report was available.
42. The Comms department was working with the VN Team on plans for the review of the Day One Skills and Day One Competences.
43. Information was shortly to be issued to the professions with reminders on delegation to RVNs and Schedule 3 procedures, with pointers to the SUPERB poster and the case studies on the RCVS website.
44. The RCVS President and VNC Chair had recorded welcome videos that had been sent out to all veterinary schools and VN educators for new VN and veterinary students.

Any other business (unclassified)

45. There was no other business raised.

Date of next meeting

46. Wednesday 17 November 2021, to be held at the RCVS.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	Thursday, 11 November 2021
Title	Minutes from Preliminary Investigation Committee and Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee meeting of Thursday, 23 September 2021
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Classified appendix
Author	Hannah Alderton Secretary, PIC DC LC 020 7856 1033 h.alderton@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	Confidential	1, 3

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Minutes of the Preliminary Investigation Committee / Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee meeting held on Thursday, 23 September 2021

Members:	Mr I Arundale*	Chair, Disciplinary Committee (DC)
	Dr N T Connell	Member of Council / Treasurer
	Dr M A Donald	Member of Council / Chair, Standards Committee (SC)
	Mrs S K Edwards*	Chair, RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)
	Dr K A Richards	Member of Council / President (Chair)
	Dr N C Smith	Member of Council
	Dr B P Viner	Chair, Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) (Vice-Chair)
	Dr C M Whiting	Member of Council
	Ms J S M Worthington	Member of Council

In attendance:	Miss H Alderton	Secretary
	Ms G Crossley	Head of Professional Conduct
	Ms E C Ferguson	Registrar / Director of Legal Services
	Ms L Lockett	CEO

*Denotes absent

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Arundale and Mrs Edwards.

Declarations of interest

2. It was stated that there were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 20 May 2021

3. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Updates – general

4. The Registrar informed the Committee of the upcoming external audit on PIC and DC, which was in the beginning stages, and that they would see progress reports over the next few months.

5. It was confirmed that all new members of PIC and DC had had their inductions and were now in their posts, along with the new Vice-Chair of PIC, who had been ratified by Council at the most recent meeting.
6. This information can be found at paragraph 1 of the confidential appendix.
7. Mr Dobson, who had recently been removed from the Register by the DC, had attempted to put in an appeal of this decision with the RCVS. He was informed that any appeals had to be submitted to the Privy Council, it was yet unclear whether he had done this and, if so, whether it had been done within the 28-day appeal period.

Monitoring/performance/working methods/outcomes/dashboard/KPIs

8. The Head of Professional Conduct outlined the reasons for the dip in KPI numbers at Stage 1, explaining that staffing issues continued to be a contributing factor and the number of concerns remaining significantly higher than previous years. The team had recently been reorganised in an attempt to maximise the use of staff time, reward more experienced members and provide an improved mentorship for new members.
9. The Committee was informed that two new case managers would be joining the department in the coming months and that a member on maternity leave would be returning in January to bring the case manager number up to ten. A replacement for the DC solicitor who had handed in their notice had been hired and would be starting in October.
10. The audit of VCMS to ensure that it was not reviewing any cases that they fell within the College's jurisdiction had been completed and had not highlighted any issues.
11. It was asked that as staffing was an ongoing issue whether the numbers in the department should be increased. The Head of Professional Conduct confirmed that ten case managers were going to be the highest number that it had ever been, and the College was hopeful that the department's structural changes along with the new recruitment would have a positive impact on the KPI figures and retention. It was also explained that in the previous round of recruitment the only two suitable candidates were both hired, good people were not being turned away. The Committee viewed this very positively and felt strongly that the increased number should be communicated to the profession.
12. The concept of an email-only enquiry and complaint system was raised with the view that a member of the Committee had positive experience with this method in their own workplaces, stating that it made the process much smoother with the initial form providing an instant record of the complaint, with the option for the case managers to call the complainant in their own time if they needed to. A discussion took place around the positives and negatives of such a system, but it was explained that the College prided itself on being accessible and handling complaints by phone was a huge part of that. Despite that it was agreed that if staff members were receiving abuse over the phone, then more measures were needed to be put in place, such as a zero-tolerance policy.

13. The point was raised whether staff members in different departments could receive training in taking complaint calls, so that in busy periods the case managers still had time to complete their other work and there was more of a support net.
14. The Committee was concerned with the fact that two members of the team had left within four months of starting and an additional two had left without notice. It was asked whether there was an exit interview process as this suggested that there was a potent issue and they were informed that HR did conduct exit interviews, however people were not always upfront about their reasoning for leaving.
15. The Committee discussed the training possibilities for case managers although it was pointed out that spending a long-time counselling and supporting animal owners may not be helpful due to the importance of case managers remaining impartial. It was felt that it may be beneficial to look into bespoke training, and the Committee all agreed that the potential high cost may be worth it if it aided the department in dealing with difficult phone calls and helped with retention.
16. It was agreed to put staff loss and turnover on the risk register.

Disciplinary Committee Report

17. The Committee noted the paper and had nothing further to add.

Veterinary Client Mediation Service (VCMS) feedback

18. The papers reflected business as usual since the previous report, the numbers shown were consistent with what had been previously reported. It was highlighted that the number of inquiries remained high and was not dropping down to the pre-Covid level. This mirrored the number coming through to the RCVS.

Annual PIC DC Financial Report

19. The Registrar explained that the paper reported on the costs of 2020 and showed that it was an unusual year. Overall costs were substantially less than immediately preceding years, which was caused by two factors: there were less cases referred by PIC to DC and also the impact of Covid. PIC meetings and a number of DC hearings had been held remotely for the first time, which was obviously significantly cheaper, along with PIC visits being reduced only to those that were absolutely necessary.
20. The Committee was asked to consider the impact of virtual PIC and DC meetings. Comments and questions included but were not limited to:
 - Not having in-person meetings over a long period of time was undesirable as there were fewer opportunities to build and maintain strong relationships between committee members;

- Hybrid meetings were the worst of both worlds;
- Success was highly dependent on the technology that the College could provide;
- The environment was changing and so this was something that the College would have to adapt to;
- No decision was going to make everyone happy;
- Experience at the College had shown that hybrid meetings with the right technology in small groups had worked really well;
- Virtual meetings were especially hard for new members;
- If you allowed people to choose it might end up that the same people always attended and the same people would always be remote, effectively ending up with two classes of committee members;
- Hybrid meetings may realistically be the only way for PIC to occur every two weeks
- The members were all recruited on the basis that the meetings would be in person;
- Legal changes may make it difficult to insist on in-person meetings.

Legislation Working Party Interim Recommendations

21. This information can be found at paragraph 2-11 of the confidential appendix.

Feedback to Standards Committee v.v. Liaison Committee Annual DC Statistic Report

22. It was asked whether the changes previously discussed around professional indemnity insurance (PII) had been made. A discussion took place, and it was agreed that the guidance around the subject, especially with regards to locums, was good but that it was getting people to read it that may be the issue. It was agreed that some kind of communication with regards to this should be looked at.

Risk Register, equality, and diversity

23. It was confirmed that there was nothing to add other than the previously discussed topic of the Professional Conduct department's staff turnover.

Any other business

24. It was confirmed that the Vice-Chair of PIC DC Liaison Committee, who was elected the previous year, would stay in place for the three-year term.

Date of next meeting

25. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday, 25 November 2021 at 10:00 am.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	11 November 2021
Title	Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report describes the work of the Preliminary Investigation Committee since RCVS Council's last meeting, including by reference to key stage indicators, and provides information about the nature of concerns being considered by the RCVS.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Chris Murdoch Senior Case Manager c.murdoch@rcvs.org.uk</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council November 2021

Introduction

1. This report provides information about the activities of the Preliminary Investigation Committee from June 2021 to October 2021 (1 November being the date of writing the report).
2. Since the last Report to Council (which gave information to 26 May 2021), there have been eleven Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) meetings: 9 June, 23 June, 7 July, 21 July, 4 August, 11 August, 25 August, 15 September, 29 September, 13 October and 27 October.

New cases considered by the PIC

3. The total number of new cases considered by the Committee at the eleven meetings referred to above is 43. Of the 43 new cases considered:
 - 33 were concluded at first consideration by the Committee. Of these:
 - 19 cases were closed with no further action, and
 - 14 cases were closed with advice issued to the veterinary surgeon.
 - 10 were referred for further investigation, that is, further enquiries, visits and/or preliminary expert reports, and
 - No cases were referred to DC.
4. No cases have been referred to the RCVS Health or Performance Protocols in the reporting period.

Ongoing Investigations

5. The PI Committee is currently investigating 39 ongoing cases where the Committee has requested statements, visits or preliminary expert reports (for example). This figure does not include cases on the Health and Performance Protocols.

Health Protocol

6. There are two veterinary surgeons either under assessment or currently on the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Protocol

7. There are no veterinary surgeons currently on the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Professional Conduct Department - Enquiries and concerns

8. Before registering a concern with the RCVS, potential complainants must make an Enquiry (either in writing or by telephone), so that Case Managers can consider with the enquirer whether they should raise a formal concern or whether the matter would be more appropriately dealt with through the Veterinary Client Mediation Service.
9. In the period 27 May to 31 October 2021:
- the number of matters registered as Enquiries was 1688, and
 - the number of formal Concerns registered in the same period was 298.
10. The table below shows the categories of matters registered as Concerns between 27 May and 31 October 2021.

Concerns registered between 27 May and 31 October 2021

Description of Category	Number of Cases
- Advertising and publicity	4
- Certification	3
- Client confidentiality	1
- Clinical and client records	2
- Communication and consent	16
- Communication between professional colleagues	0
- Conviction/notifiable occupation notification	9
- CPD compliance	1
- Delegation to veterinary nurses	0
- Equine pre-purchase examinations	3
- Euthanasia of animals	10
- Giving evidence for court	0
- Health case (<i>potential</i>)	2
- Microchipping	0
- Miscellaneous	13
- Practice information, fees & animal insurance	5
- Referrals and second opinions	0
- Registration investigation	0
- Restoration application	1
- Social media and networking forums	3
- Treatment of animals by unqualified persons	0
- Use of samples, images, post-mortems and disposal	0
- Veterinary care	213
- Veterinary medicines	7
- Veterinary teams and leaders	1

- Whistle-blowing	0
- 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief	4
- Unassigned	0
Total	298

Data source – Profcon computer system concerns data.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

11. In the period 27 May 2021 to 31 October 2021, the Committee has referred five cases involving five veterinary surgeons to the Disciplinary Committee.

Veterinary Investigators

12. The Veterinary Investigators and the Chief Investigator have undertaken one visit since the last report. This was a follow-up visit on a held open case to ensure the veterinary surgeon's compliance with specific areas of the Code of Conduct. In addition, the Veterinary Investigators have carried out a joint visit with the VMD to a wildlife animal hospital and a visit with the Police to a veterinary practice to execute a search warrant.

Concerns procedure

13. At Stage 1 of the process, the aim is for the Case Examiner Group to decide 90% of cases within four months of registration of complaint (the Stage 1 KPI). In the months since the last Report to Council the compliance rates have been: May – 76%, June - 65%, July – 78%, August – 67%, September – 68% and October 75%. The compliance rate continues to fluctuate, due to a number of different factors. As previously reported, staff changes and furloughing have placed a greater burden on Case Managers, which can contribute to delays. While the furloughing scheme has come to an end, delays incurred earlier in the year have an impact on the compliance rates in the months following. Unfortunately, there have also been further staff changes during the reporting period, leading to ongoing disruption. There has also been a significant increase in the volume of enquiries and concerns received in the first months of this year – for example the average monthly number of concerns since the start of the year is 65, compared with an average of 41 in the last year, an increase of more than 50%. Practitioners continue to work under different working arrangements, which can make it difficult for them to respond in a timely fashion. As reported previously, other members of the Profcon Department are working to help progress cases and answer enquiries to try to minimise delays. The KPIs and rates of compliance have been the subject of detailed reporting and discussion at PIC/DC Liaison earlier this month.

14. The Stage 2 KPI is now for the PIC to reach a decision on simple cases before it within seven months, and on complex cases within 12 months. A case is deemed to be complex where the PIC requests that witness statements and/or expert evidence be obtained.

15. In the period 27 May 2021 to 31 October 2021, the PIC reached a decision (to close, hold open or refer to DC) within the relevant KPI:

- in 26 out of 35 simple cases (74%).

16. Six complex cases were decided, of which four met the 12-month KPI. In accordance with normal practice, cases and KPI compliance in general are reported and discussed in more detail at the PIC/DC Liaison Committee meeting.

Operational matters

17. As stated above, further staff changes have taken place in the department, with two Case Managers leaving in August. Two new Case Managers have been recruited and are due to start in November and December. Further recruitment to increase the number of Case Managers to try to reduce disruption is underway. A new disciplinary solicitor started in September to replace one that had moved on and is settling in well and taking on an increasing number of cases.

18. New PIC members were inducted in June and have settled in well. Training sessions for all PIC members and staff took place on 30 June and 22 September covering a range of issues and case studies, including conflicts of interest and the use of formal advice to respondents. A further training session is to take place on 19 November.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	11 November 2021
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Sandra Neary Professional Conduct Officer s.neary@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0730</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0740</p>

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

Report to Council

Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Council, there have been three meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee, which took place on 29 June, 10 August and 21 September. The meeting scheduled to take place on 2 November was cancelled, as no new cases were referred, and no decisions were required on the ongoing cases. The next scheduled meeting is on 14 December 2021.

RVN Concerns received / registered

2. In the period 26 May 2021 to 2 November 2021, there were 18 new Concerns relating to RVNs. Of these 18 new Concerns:
 - six cases were closed at Stage 1 of the concerns process.
 - 12 are currently under investigation by the Case Examiner Group (a veterinary nurse and lay member on RVN PIC and a Case Manager).

RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. There have been four new cases considered by the RVN PIC between 26 May 2021 and 2 November 2021. One case was referred to external solicitors for formal statements to be taken. One case was closed, and two cases were closed with advice issued to the RVN. At the meeting on 29 June, an ongoing case was considered and closed with advice issued to the RVN.

Ongoing Investigations

4. Two concerns are currently under investigation and will be returned to the RVN PIC for a decision in due course.

Health Concerns

5. One RVN is currently being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

Performance Concerns

6. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

Referral to Disciplinary Committee

7. Since the last report, the RVN PIC has referred one case to the RVN Disciplinary Committee. A hearing date has yet to be confirmed. A disciplinary hearing took place between 14 and 17 June 2021 in respect of Laura Benson. At the outset of the hearing, Ms Benson admitted to most of the charges against her and the Committee accepted these admissions. The Disciplinary Committee found Ms Benson guilty of serious professional misconduct and decided that the appropriate and proportionate sanction, was to suspend Ms Benson's registration for nine months.

Operational matters

8. Training sessions for all PIC members and staff took place on 30 June and 22 September covering a range of issues and case studies, including conflicts of interest and the use of formal advice to respondents. A further training session is to take place on 19 November.

Summary	
Meeting	Council
Date	11 November 2021
Title	Disciplinary Committee Report
Summary	Update of Disciplinary Committee since the last Council meeting held on 10 June 021
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Author	Yemisi Yusuph Clerk to the Disciplinary Committee Tel: 020 7202 0729 Email: y.yusuph@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications		
Document	Classification¹	Rationales²
Paper	Unclassified	n/a

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Report of Disciplinary Committee hearings since the last Council meeting on 10 June 2021

Background

1. Since the last update to Council, the Disciplinary Committee ('the Committee') have met on five occasions. The RVN Committee have met once.

Hearings

Henry Eccles

1. On Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 May, the Committee met to hear the resumption of the Inquiry into Mr Eccles.
2. In November 2018, Mr Eccles first appeared before the Committee where he admitted a number of clinical failings, including regarding his diagnosis of the cat, the keeping of accurate and detailed clinical records, giving the animal appropriate treatment, surgery and care, and failing to provide the cat's owners with adequate information on the cat's care upon discharge.
3. Mr Eccles admitted both charges against him, and the Committee found him guilty of serious professional misconduct. The Committee made the choice to postpone its decision on sanction on the condition that Mr Eccles agreed to abide by a set of undertakings in the interim. These undertakings included: the preparation of a personal development plan; the enrolment of his practice in the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme; the appointment of a veterinary mentor; the completion of additional training and CPD; and his agreement to pay any costs of complying with the undertakings, including the appointment of and work undertaken by the appointed mentor.
4. At the resumed hearing in May, the Committee considered whether Mr Eccles successfully complied with the undertakings he had agreed to in 2018.
5. The Committee received evidence from Mr Eccles confirming that he had complied with all the original undertakings. It also considered some further undertakings that Mr Eccles had agreed to in October 2020 when his reconvened hearing was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. These further undertakings included: confirming his compliance with the personal development plan he had drawn up in 2019; his practice achieving the Core Standards accreditation level within the Practice Standards Scheme (this was achieved in April 2021); continuing to meet with his veterinary mentor; and undertaking additional CPD – all of which were found to be completed.
6. The Committee also heard evidence from both the veterinary mentor and Mr Eccles himself. In his evidence, Mr Eccles apologised to the owners of the cat for the care he had provided, admitting that he had let them and himself down by not having sufficient knowledge to recognise the cat's needs and to provide him with a sufficient level of care. He also confirmed he was continuing to make improvements to his practice and that he had enjoyed the process of being mentored.
7. Having taken all the evidence into account, the Committee considered its sanction for the original admitted charges from November 2018. In the end, the Committee considered that a reprimand and warning as to future conduct was the most appropriate and proportionate sanction.

Laura Benson RVN

8. Between Monday 14 and Thursday 17 June, the Committee met to hear the Inquiry into Laura Benson RVN, which involved six charges against her.
9. The charges were in related to her conduct in which she took items from her veterinary practice without paying for them and for asking a colleague to dishonestly input one of her pet's clinical details against the records of another one of her pets, which was also registered at the practice.
10. At the outset of the hearing, Ms Benson admitted to charges 1,2,3,4 and 6 of the allegations and the Committee accepted these admissions. The Committee considered evidence from Ms Benson's colleagues including witness statements, written testimonial and clinical records for her animals.
11. When asked about taking items from the practice, Ms Benson explained that she did not intend to take items without paying for them and that she had not realised how much she had taken. She also explained that she had paid back in full what she owed to the practice. The Committee considered that Ms Benson's conduct had involved a degree of premeditation as she had repeatedly taken items over an extended period. They also considered that there had been a potential risk of injury to animals resulting from Ms Benson's request to incorrectly write up her animal's veterinary records.
12. The defence attested that no actual harm had come to any animal because of Ms Benson's actions and that she previously had an unblemished career in veterinary nursing. She had also admitted most of the charges against her and paid for the items she had taken in full.
13. The Committee found Ms Benson guilty of serious professional misconduct and in deciding on sanction, the Committee considered all the evidence before it and the submissions from both parties. The Committee decided that a nine-month suspension from the Register was the most appropriate sanction and was one that best took the public, and Ms Benson's, interest into account.
14. The Committee stated in its decision that *"the Committee accepted that Ms Benson had developing insight in making her admissions and we give her credit for her long unblemished career. She admitted to a large part of the allegation, expressed remorse for her actions and has repaid the practice. We have also heard a number of positive testimonials which spoke positively of Ms Benson's recent conduct"*
15. The Committee's full decision on finding of facts and misconduct can be found here: [Decision on Facts and on Disgraceful Conduct in a Professional Respect - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)
16. When making its decision sanction, the Committed considered all matters and concluded that the appropriate and proportionate sanction, was to suspend Ms Benson's registration for nine months.
17. The full decision on sanction can be found here: [Decision on Sanction, Benson, Laura - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

Louise Henry

18. Between Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 June, the Committee met to hear the Inquiry into Dr Louise Marie Henry.
19. The charge against her was in relation to her conduct in which she wrote a letter on behalf of a client that dishonestly claimed that a pregnant ewe had died whilst in transit to a veterinary practice where she was employed, when in fact she had euthanised the ewe at the practice following a caesarean section.
20. The full charge can be found here: [Henry, Louise, Charges - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](https://www.rcvs.org.uk/charges/professionals/henry-louise)
21. The Committee heard that the ewe was lambing and brought to the practice by a client. Dr Henry was on-call at the time and advised a Caesarean section. The client agreed and Dr Henry delivered two live lambs and one dead lamb. Dr Henry was concerned about the welfare of the ewe post-surgery because of the risk of peritonitis and advised that the ewe should be euthanised. The client agreed to the ewe being euthanised and then asked Dr Henry to write a letter in which it was stated that the ewe had died in transit on route to the practice. Dr Henry agreed to write the letter in which she falsely certified that the ewe had died in transit. The letter was written on practice letterheaded paper, the letter was addressed "To whom it may concern" and was signed "Louise Henry MRCVS".
22. The letter relating to charge 1 came to light on 29 January when the practice director found the letter about the ewe's cause of death in an insurance file. The practice arranged an investigatory meeting with Dr Henry where she admitted that writing the letter was an error of judgement. When asked about her conduct, Dr Henry explained that the client had subsequently been dissatisfied with the letter she had written and asked her to change it. She refused to amend the letter and told him that it was wrong of her to have written it in the first place and that she regretted having done so.
23. Dr Henry told the Committee that she valued integrity very highly and that she was deeply ashamed that she had been prepared to write the dishonest letter. The Committee heard several testimonials from people who had worked with or studied alongside Dr Henry, who all attested to her skill as a veterinary surgeon and that they had no concerns about her integrity and honesty. She self-reported her actions from January to the RCVS and from the outset admitted the facts of the charge. During the hearing, Dr Henry submitted that her action of dishonest false certification amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.
24. The Committee stated that *"in this case, the aggravating features were limited and the mitigating factors extensive. There was no premeditated dishonesty or financial gain involved, there was no actual harm or risk of harm to an animal or human and this was a single incident in an otherwise unblemished 13-year career. The Committee found that the shame and remorse expressed by Dr Henry were entirely genuine. Her conduct on this occasion was entirely untypical of her practise"*
25. After careful consideration, the Committee concluded that the substantial mitigating features permitted it to take the somewhat unusual course of issuing a reprimand in a case involving dishonesty. In taking this course, the Committee attached significant weight not only to the

isolated nature of the event but also to the genuine insight shown by Dr Henry and the lasting impact this event has had upon her. In the Committee's assessment, a reasonable and fully informed member of the public would, in this particular case, regard a reprimand as a sanction which protected the public interest in the profession and upheld its standards.

26. The full decision can be found here: [Henry, Louise, Decision on Finding of Facts, Disgraceful Conduct and Sanction - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

Sue Dyson

27. The hearing in relation to the conduct of Sue Dyson took place between 12 to 13 November 2020 and then 28 June to 9 July 2021. The allegations against her concerned her conduct in late 2018, relating to a chain of dishonest statements and actions, including fabricating a letter from a fictitious Home Office Inspector, in order to have her research.
28. At the outset of the hearing, Dr Dyson admitted that she had written and sent the letter and that its contents were misleading and risked undermining a Government system designed to promote animal welfare and research ethics, but denied that her actions in doing so had been dishonest, claiming she had amnesia. Dr Dyson also denied that she had made dishonest and misleading remarks to colleagues in meetings and correspondence leading up to the letter being sent.
29. The Disciplinary Committee heard that in 2018, Dr Dyson was employed as Head of Clinical Orthopaedics at the Animal Health Trust (AHT). Having previously been given the go-ahead by the AHT's Clinical Research Ethics Committee for her research project 'Influence of rider: horse body weight ratios on equine welfare and performance – a pilot study', Dr Dyson completed the project in autumn 2018 and proposed to publish the results in the *Journal of Veterinary Behaviour: Clinical Applications and Research*.
30. After peer-reviewing the project paper at the request of Journal Editor Karen Overall, Dr Matthew Parker, a Senior Lecturer in Behavioural Pharmacology at the University of Portsmouth, was concerned by the lack of a Home Office licence and asked for details of the licence or an explanation of why the project didn't need one, and for the paper to be re-submitted.
31. In reply, Dr Dyson then emailed Ms Overall stating: "We have a former Home Office Inspector on our AHT Ethical Committee and two current licence holders (Named Veterinary Surgeons) who are fully conversant with the current legislation... I also sought informal advice from a current Inspector. All were fully aware of the protocols to be employed and gave me assurance that in their opinion Home Office approval would not be required". Ms Overall then asked Dr Dyson to obtain a letter from the Home Office to support this position.
32. On 24 December 2018, Dr Dyson sent Ms Overall a letter purportedly from a Home Office Inspector called Dr Butler who, she explained, had advised her during the planning phase of the project. In the letter, the fictitious Dr Butler confirmed that their advice was sought for the project and that in their opinion, a Home Office Licence was not required.

33. Ms Overall then sent the 'Dr Butler letter' to Dr Parker for further review, who decided to contact Dr Martin Whiting, Head of Operations at the Home Office Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) to ask if he knew of Dr Butler.
34. Dr Whiting subsequently confirmed that the Home Office had no record of employing a Dr Butler as an Inspector and that they were in the process of making further inquiries into the matter.
35. After Dr Whiting's response was forward to Dr Dyson, she replied to him stating that she thought the studies' procedures **did not meet the criteria** for the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA), but that this was questioned by peer reviewers. She said that her decision to send Dr Butler's letter was one that she would 'eternally regret' and that she was 'an inherently honest person'. She explained that she was under a huge amount of pressure in her personal and professional life and that she was 'fully aware that [she] acted completely inappropriately and she requested the incident be overlooked'.
36. On 1 March 2019, Dr Dyson sent a letter to William Reynolds, Head of the Home Office ASRU, in which she expressed remorse for writing the 'Dr Butler letter'. Mr Reynolds subsequently raised a concern with the RCVS about Dr Dyson's alleged behaviour.
37. Dr Jane Downes, who chaired the Disciplinary Committee, and spoke on its behalf, said: "The Committee heard from Dr Dyson that she had no recollection of several events detailed in the charge, including writing the letter from Dr Butler and sending the email to Ms Overall which contained Dr Butler's letter. She accepted that the letter was dishonest and that it should not have been sent. However, she also claimed that, as she could not remember writing the letter, she did not act dishonestly.
38. The Committee heard testimonials from several witnesses who held Dr Dyson in high regard, including colleagues from the AHT, who attested to her integrity. However, there were many dubious claims made by Dr Dyson throughout the hearing, including that the Home Office Inspector that she referenced as 'my friendly inspector' was someone who could have given informed consent to a project as Dr Dyson confirmed that she had met the individual briefly, around two and a half years ago at a drinks reception.
39. In reaching its decisions, the Committee considered Dr Dyson's previously impeccable character, the written and verbal testimonies from witnesses. They also considered that during the hearing, Dr Dyson explained that at the time she fabricated the letter, she was under a lot of work and personal pressures, including managing a workload amidst colleagues' resigning or going on maternity leave and it being the anniversary of her dog having to be humanely destroyed. However, it did not accept Dr Dyson's claims that she had amnesia at this time, and considered that she had not owned up to her wrongdoing until it was discovered. Although Dr Dyson maintained her actions were not pre-meditated, the Committee considered that, in the case of the forged letter, a certain amount of planning and careful thought was involved. The Committee believed that Dr Dyson knew what she was doing at the time, but acknowledged she may subsequently have blanked out what she did.

40. The Committee found all but one of the allegations proved and confirmed that it *“was satisfied that the writing and sending of that letter was the culmination of a course of dishonest conduct.”*
41. The Committee found that Dr Dyson’s conduct had breached parts of the RCVS Code of Conduct and amounted to serious professional misconduct.
42. Dr Downes continued: “The Committee determined that it was important that a clear message be sent that this sort of behaviour is wholly inappropriate and [was] not to be tolerated. It brings discredit upon Dr Dyson and discredit upon the profession. For whatever reason, Dr Dyson chose not to respond to Ms Overall’s email on 30 November 2018 in an honest and straightforward way. Instead, she lied about the makeup of the AHT Ethical Committee in order to cloak her response with authority. She also lied about having received advice from a current Inspector for the same reason.
43. “In the Committee’s view, she made a conscious decision to provide a dishonest response. She no doubt believed that would be the end of the matter. When that did not work, she lied further in the email to her co-author, Andrew Hemmings, claiming to have a letter from her friendly Inspector. When that too did not work, she impersonated a Home Office Inspector in creating the ‘Dr Butler letter’. She then added a false declaration to the manuscript, which she subsequently submitted to the Journal along with an email containing yet further lies.
44. “That was all done in a blatant and wilful attempt to deceive Ms Overall... into believing the contents of the correspondence to be true, that confirmation a Home Office Licence was not required had been obtained and all was therefore well with the submitted manuscript.
45. “There was no rush, or urgency to have the paper published and the actions were not done in a moment of panic. No doubt she had not planned the entire course of events in advance, but instead reacted to each new obstacle that came her way, but her overall course of dishonest conduct spanned over three weeks.
46. The Committee was well aware of the impact and ramifications for Dr Dyson of any decision to remove her from the Register but had to weigh her interests with those of the public. In doing so it took account of the context and circumstances of the case, all matters of personal mitigation, as detailed above, Dr Dyson’s undoubted distinguished international career and reputation and the need to act proportionally.
47. The Committee concluded that *“for all the reasons given above, the Committee was of the view that the need to uphold proper standards of conduct within the veterinary profession, together with the public interest in maintaining confidence in the profession of veterinary surgeons, meant that a period of suspension would not be sufficient and that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in all the circumstances of this case was that of removal from the Register.”*
48. The full decision can be found here: [Dyson, Sue, Decision of Finding of Facts, Disgraceful Conduct in a Professional Respect and Sanction - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

[Laura Padron Vega](#)

49. On 21 July, the Committee met to hear the resumption in Ms Padron Vega's application for restoration. The original application was held on 8 and 9 December 2020.
50. In December 2018, Ms Padron Vega was removed from the Register following an investigation into her actions whilst working as an Official Veterinarian (OV).
51. At the original restoration application hearing in 2020, the Committee decided that Ms Padron Vega's application should be adjourned for six months to allow her to prove to the Committee that it was appropriate to restore her name to the Register. The basis for this decision was that the Committee had concerns about her keeping up-to-date with the knowledge and skills needed to return to practice, in particular in the area that she had suggested she wished to work in.
52. At the most recent hearing, Ms Padron Vega sought to address the concerns that the Committee had raised about her professional development.
53. In addition to the documentation, she provided in her original restoration hearing, which included positive testimonials from colleagues, she provided evidence of her continuing professional development (CPD) since that last hearing.
54. This included a letter from her previous employer, who confirmed she had more recently worked for them as a Certification Support Officer from February to March 2021, where they received positive feedback on her conduct.
55. The documentation also included a letter from another practice confirming that Ms Padron Vega had been offered a position of employment with them, and a separate letter from practice veterinary surgeon, Dr Khan MRCVS, confirming that he would be her mentor.
56. Dr Khan also confirmed that she had been coming to the practice for work experience and he considered her to have good working knowledge of current medicines used within the practice. He further outlined in his letter what CPD support the practice would be providing for Ms Padron Vega as part of her employment with them.
57. An additional piece of evidence was a testimonial from Dr Max Rutana MRCVS, who worked with Ms Padron Vega from September to November 2018. He confirmed that Ms Padron Vega had worked unsupervised for a period of three weeks, and that he found her clinical notes during this period to be satisfactory and they received no complaints about her conduct from clients.
58. Ms Padron Vega also submitted CPD documentation which confirmed she has taken a Certification Support Officers' course and examination in mid-December 2020.
59. In response to questions from the Committee about her small animal practice experience and how long she had been shadowing Dr Khan for, Ms Padron Vega explained that she had completed 80 hours of shadowing with Dr Khan and that in her future employment under his mentorship, he would be available to support her. She also explained that her job offer was evidence that she would continue to be trained in the relevant area of veterinary work.

60. Dr Khan who provided reassurance of Ms Padron Vega's continued professional development with his practice and the ongoing supervision that she would be under. He explained that the supervision would last at least three months.
61. The Committee concluded that Ms Padron Vega accepted the findings of dishonesty that were made against her at the original Inquiry hearing.
62. In her Reflective Statement, Ms Padron Vega acknowledged that veterinarians have a professional responsibility to ensure the integrity of veterinary certification, that she is now aware that when signing documents as a veterinary surgeon they need to be approached with care and accuracy.
63. The Committee concluded that they were confident that Ms Padron Vega is unlikely to repeat the conduct which resulted in her removal from the Register.
64. Consequently, the Committee decided that she should be restored to the Register.
65. The full decision can be found here: [Padron Vega, Laura, Decision of the Disciplinary Committee on the Application of the Applicant for Restoration to the Register - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

Andrew Dobson

66. Between Monday 2 and Wednesday 4 August, the Committee met virtually (via Zoom) to hear the Inquiry into Mr Dobson.
67. At the start of the hearing the RCVS applied for it to take place in the absence of Mr Dobson who had failed to respond to the RCVS when informed about the hearing. The application was granted by the DC on the basis that Mr Dobson, by refusing to respond to communications from the College – including by letter, telephone and email – had voluntarily waived his right to attend the hearing.
68. The Inquiry was in relation to 3 charges against Mr Dobson. The first charge was that, on 21 June 2018 while he was not on the Register of Veterinary Surgeons, Mr Dobson had carried out an equine pre-purchase examination (PPE) and used the postnominals MRCVS – which only registered veterinary surgeons may use – to sign the associated PPE certificate and covering letter. The Committee found this charge proven after it was presented with evidence of the certificate and covering letter alongside the fact that Mr Dobson had been removed from the Register on 1 June 2018 for non-payment of the annual renewal fee needed to remain on the RCVS Register. He was only restored to the Register upon paying his outstanding fee on 23 November 2018.
69. The second charge related to Mr Dobson's failure to have professional indemnity insurance (or PII) or other equivalent arrangements in place for the period 21 June 2018 to 1 August 2020 and for failing to provide adequate details of his PII when requested to by the RCVS for the period between 17 March and 4 August 2020. The requirement for veterinary surgeons to have PII arrangements or other equivalent arrangements in place is contained in the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct and the Committee was presented with evidence that Mr Dobson had failed

to confirm that he had this in place prior to 1 August 2020 and that, furthermore, he had failed to respond to numerous requests for evidence from the College. On this basis the Committee found these charges proven.

70. The third charge was that Mr Dobson had failed to respond to numerous reasonable requests from the RCVS, including: between 8 October and 12 December 2019 failing to provide written comments on concerns relating to the equine PPE; between 17 March and 21 July failing to provide written comments on the concern that he had carried out the PPE and used the postnominals MRCVS while not on the Register; that between 18 June and 18 November 2018 he failed to provide details of his continuing professional development (CPD) for the previous three years; and that between 12 August and 18 November 2020 he failed to provide copies of his Day Book and/or Controlled Drugs Register for the period 1 June 2018 to 1 August 2020. All elements of this charge were found proven when the Committee was presented with evidence of numerous attempts to contact him that went unacknowledged and unanswered.
71. After finding all the charges provided, the Committee went on to establish with the above charges amounted to disgraceful conduct. In doing so, the Committee heard submissions from the College Counsel. Ms Curtis (College Counsel) Submitted that all the factual findings in this case amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.
72. After carefully considering the College submissions, the Committee decided that the Respondent's conduct in respect of all the charges demonstrated departures so far below professional standards expected of Mr Dobson as to amount to disgraceful conduct.
73. The Committee then went onto determine the appropriate sanction to imposed on Mr Dobson. Having not received any submissions from Mr Dobson, the Committee took advice from the Legal Assessor and made reference to the Guidance. The Committee took into account both aggravating and mitigating factors.
74. The Committee concluded that Mr Dobson demonstrated a wilful disregard of the role of the RCVS and the regulatory processes by way of his disgraceful conduct. In addition, his lack of engagement with the hearing process indicates to the Committee that he is not engaging with his regulator and, along with the limited insight and lack of remediation with respect to the disgraceful conduct, this demonstrates a lack of insight into the seriousness of his actions or their consequences.
75. Consequently, the Committee directed the Registrar to remove Mr Dobson's name from the Register.
76. The full decision can be found here: [Dobson, Andrew Michael, Decision of the Disciplinary Committee - Professionals \(rcvs.org.uk\)](#)

Upcoming DC's

77. There are three Inquires that have been listed to take place:

- 15-19 November 2021

- 6-14 December 2021
- 10-28 January 2022

78. There are five other Inquiry's to be listed and the Clerk is currently working to list these as soon as possible.